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Internationalization and Multilingualism in Brazil: Possibilities of Content and Language Integrated Learning and Intercomprehension Approaches

Kyria Rebeca Finardi

***Abstract*—**The study discusses the role of foreign languages in general and of English in particular in the process of internationalization of higher education (IHE), defined as the intentional integration of an international, intercultural or global dimension in the purpose, function or offer of higher education. The study is bibliographical and offers a brief outline of the current political, economic and educational scenarios in Brazil, before discussing some possibilities and challenges for the development of multilingualism and IHE there. The theoretical background includes a review of Brazilian language and internationalization policies. The review and discussion concludes that the use of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach and the Intercomprehension approach to foreign language teaching/learning are relevant alternatives to foster multilingualism in that context.

***Keywords*—**Brazil, higher education, internationalization, multilingualism.

I. Introduction

BRAZIL is currently facing an upturn in its political, economic and educational systems. A continent-sized country with over 205 million inhabitants and once the 6th largest economy in the world, Brazil boosts 216 languages though most Brazilians are monolingual and speak only the official language, Portuguese [1]. According to Ponzo, Finardi and Calazans [2], minority languages such as Guarani and heritage languages such as Pomeranian [3], are seriously endangered in Brazil for lack of linguistic and educational policies to protect them.

As pointed out by Archanjo [4], Finardi [5], [6] and others, Brazilians must reflect on and elaborate language policies that promote understanding and tolerance among cultures, languages and identities and that stimulate multilingualism and equal rights and opportunities, as well as a critical and sustainable internationalization agenda.

In times of political turmoil and conflicts of representation such as the one currently experienced in Brazil, the reflection on and promotion of policies that reflect people's wishes are even more pressing. With the promulgation of the bill 746/ 2016, converted into law in 2017 that reforms education in Brazil, English was made the only mandatory foreign language in schools, thus threatening the teaching/learning of other foreign languages such as Spanish, French and Italian.

According to Finardi [6], the offer of other foreign languages such as Spanish, Italian and French could be guaranteed by the use of the Intercomprehension Approach (IA) and according to Ponzo et al. [2], the offer of other minority languages such as Guarani could be guaranteed by the use of the CLIL approach. The discussion suggests that perhaps both approaches, the IA and the CLIL, could be used to teach minority languages, other foreign languages and different contents, through them. Yet, the educational reforms and internationalization agendas are far from reaching consensus among linguists and higher education stakeholders when it comes to the use, teaching and learning of languages for internationalization purposes. Given the current scenario of social protests related to issues of representation underway in Brazil since 2013, this paper discusses how multilinguism and internationalization may be fostered in Brazil in light of the educational and political reform underway.

With that aim, the paper first describes language policies and internationalization programs that embody internationalization policies before addressing the main question motivating this study, namely, what are the challenges and possibilities for developing multilingualism and internationalization in Brazil?

II. Language Policies

According to Finardi [5], [6], despite the common belief that Brazil is a monolingual country, it is in fact a multilingual country with dozens of immigrant and indigenous languages spread in many communities where Portuguese is not the mother tongue, though it is the only official language apart from Brazilian sign language. With a population of over 205 million people, Brazil is surrounded by Spanish speakers and is the only Portuguese speaking country in the Americas.

As pointed out by Leffa [7] and Finardi [5], [6], Brazilians must recognize and preserve its multilingualism by fighting against the omission and discrimination towards linguistic minorities through the reflection on and elaboration of language policies that promote understanding and tolerance among cultures, languages and identities.

Language policies are defined by Rajagopalan [8] as the discussions that stem concrete actions regarding languages in a specific context, and Grin [9] claims that in linguistically diverse rich contexts, conflicts are bound to exist, thus requiring some sort of intervention in the form of language policies.

Leffa [7] warns Brazilians against the danger of linguistic isolation in a country where the 'only' national language is

Kyria Rebeca Finardi is with the Federal University of Espirito Santo, Brazil (e-mail: kyria.finardi@gmail.com).

Portuguese and where Brazilians face many challenges to learn foreign languages, be them the language of their parents (heritage languages such as Guarani and other indigenous languages or immigrant languages such as Italian, German, Japanese and Pomeranian, to cite but a few), the language of their neighbors (Spanish), the international language (English) or even appropriations of English such as Brazilian English, whatever that may be [10], [11].

Jenkins [12] proposes the view of English as a multilingual franca as referring to its use in multilingual contexts where most people share the same lingua franca, and in that sense, Finardi [10] proposes that English has the status of an international language, rather than a multilingua franca in Brazil. In a country with more than 200 languages spoken by minorities, the development of multilingualism and the view of English as a multilingua franca [12] in Brazil represent a huge challenge for educational policies and pockets.

As reported in [6], in 2015, Brazil came in 41st position (out of 70 countries and ranked 12) in proficiency in English with only about 5% of its population being able to speak English fluently. Still according to Finardi [6], Brazilians want to learn English despite the number of Brazilians who speak that language fluently. The mismatch between wanting to speak English and in fact doing it fluently can perhaps be partially explained by the role of English in Brazilian language policies until 2017. However, before addressing the role of English in Brazil, it is important to stress that the absence of policies that match people's wishes can have serious social and representation problems. In Brazil, this became evident in the protests that broke out in 2013 over free transport to students and that spread to other social claims related to education, corruption and government representation. In the case of language policies that are not aligned with people's wishes, and as suggested by Finardi [10], these can have serious consequences such as the abundant offer of private language courses (to compensate for the lack of language and educational policies to guarantee language teaching/ learning in public schools) that creates a social gap between those who can afford to learn a foreign language in private institutes and those who cannot.

In an analysis of the role of English in language policies in Brazil (before 2017), Finardi and Archanjo [13] claimed that it was threefold and divergent, depending on the level of education analyzed: in basic education, English had the same status of any other foreign language that could be taught (or not) depending on the choice of the school community. In secondary education, the panorama changed and there was an explicit suggestion to include Spanish in the curricula of secondary schools. Finally, in higher education, English was required as an international and academic language.

So as to offer a solution for 1) the social gap created by the offer of language courses in the private sector, 2) the overall development of English proficiency, 3) the inclusion of other foreign languages (besides English) in the curricula and the 4) boosting of multilingualism in Brazil, Finardi proposed a change of language policy [10] there, as well as the use of the IA [6] to teach other foreign languages (such as French, Spanish and Italian).

According to Finardi's [10] proposal, English should be seen as an international language and should be taught as such, as a mandatory language in compulsory school and it would be offered together with other foreign languages, the choice of which would continue to be made by each school community, depending on their context and needs. Given the proximity between Portuguese and the most frequently taught foreign languages in Brazil after English that is, Spanish, French and Italian, in that order, Finardi [6] suggested the use of the IA to foreign language teaching/learning as a way to foster multilingualism in Brazil. In 2017, the Federal Government approved the provisional measure (MP 746/2016) that was transformed into Law 13.415, making the teaching of English mandatory in basic education.

As for institutional policies to promote foreign language teaching in favor of internationalization, there are some universities in Brazil, such as the Federal University of the ABC (UFABC) that offer academic subjects in English (the so-called English Medium Instruction – EMI), though, according to Martinez' [14] account, the offer of EMI courses in Brazil is still very timid.

According to Sarmento, Abreu-e-Lima and Moraes Filho [15], the expansion of the IHE in Brazil in the last five years has resulted in a growing search for language learning. Finardi, Santos and Guimarães [16] claim that languages are essential for the development of the internationalization process and Guimarães, Finardi and Casotti [17] state that in Brazil, it is still necessary to:

a) improve the proficiency in foreign languages of teachers and students;
b) to improve the quality of Basic Education in the teaching of foreign languages;
c) improve the ability to offer subjects in other languages;
d) include the possibility of studying other languages, different from the most known ones;
e) understand that a language policy is also part of internationalization "at home" and is fundamental for the internationalization process as a whole;
f) understand that a policy to promote multilingualism is also part of the internationalization actions;
g) understand that English is important, but other languages should also be offered - and this offer should occur in Basic Education.

In this scenario of internationalization and language use, the phenomenon of globalization has once again put languages in evidence in Brazil, emphasizing the importance of international communication, since linguistic resources are necessary to move in borderless spaces [18].

III. Internationalization Programs

The IHE has been defined as the integration of an intercultural and global dimension in the university tripartite mission of offering education, research and extension activities [19]. Finardi [1], [5], [20] claims that Brazilian government funded internationalization programs such as the Sciences Without Borders (SwB) and the Languages Without

Borders (LwB) can be seen as implicit forms of internationalization and language policies. As suggested by Guimarães, Finardi and Casotti [17], more recently the Brazilian plan for internationalizing graduate programs embodied in the CAPES-PrInt call expressively mentions the use of English and Portuguese for candidacies, and as such, it can be seen as an implicit language policy expressed in an internationalization plan. Thus, it is assumed in this paper that there is a relation between internationalization and linguistic policies materialized in educational reforms and governmental programs such as the passing of the educational Law 13,415 of 2017, which made the teaching of English mandatory in Brazilian basic education and internationalization programs such as the SwB, the LwB and the CAPES-PrInt.

IHE, often understood as cooperation and academic exchange between national and foreign institutions, has been seen as an important strategy for the development of higher education institutions [21] though there is no consensus to its effects. Indeed, some researchers claim that not all the effects of internationalization are positive and may represent a form of colonization [22], often violent [23] and with different impacts to the North and South [16], [24], [25] and to non-English speaking countries [26].

Regardless of the view of internationalization, it is important to note that this process goes far beyond the notion of cooperation and academic mobility, though it is often seen as synonymous with international education, international cooperation, global education, multicultural education, transnational education, education without borders, overseas education and cross-border education. Other authors, such as Jenkins [27], see internationalization as synonymous with globalization, and Menezes de Souza [28] also understands that the internationalization process is so linked to globalization that it is difficult to tell whether it is a consequence or cause of globalization.

According to Finardi and Ortiz [29], many European universities started the process of internationalization with a financial objective that according to Vavrus and Pekol [25], coincided with the neoliberal decline in public funding of universities, forcing these institutions to seek external sources of funding, such as tuition fees from foreign students.

Based on the assumption that Brazilian universities have different motivations for internationalization, Finardi and Ortiz [29] analyzed the internationalization process of two Brazilian universities, one public and the other private, based on the hypothesis that the private university would have more economic motivation for internationalization than the public one, since the latter does not depend on financing from student fees once it is completely financed by government funds (federal, state or municipal). However, this hypothesis was completely refuted in the study once results indicated that the public university had more (academic) motivation for internationalization, since the Brazilian internal market is very comfortable for private universities that do not need to seek external financing (in the form of monthly fees) outside the country, given the fact that the number of Brazilian students in private institutions represents 75% of all Brazilian academics.

In fact, we can identify several motivations for internationalization, and the academic and economic objectives are only two aspects. Taquini et al. [30] analyzed the offer of EMI courses in Turkish universities contrasting these results with those in Brazil. The study was carried out at a key political moment for Turkey, which was applying for entry into the European Community, thereby suffering a number of internal and external pressures both to "Westernize" and to "maintain its Eastern culture and reference." Results of the study showed that Turkey, unlike Brazil, had more public higher education institutions (75%, as opposed to about 25% in Brazil) and that the main motivation for the internationalization of Turkish institutions was political rather than economic (like in Europe) or academic (like in Brazil).

As previously suggested, internationalization, often equated with the concept of globalization [27], creates benefits and losses to different players in different loci of enunciation. Among the factors to be improved in this process, the International Association of Universities points out issues such as inequalities and limited access to education. This is due to the fact that not all students are able to pay for this internationalized education, thus increasing the "social gap" and the risk of education becoming commodified, driven by globalization, as already described in the case of English [10], [31]. In order to avoid this negative effect, it is necessary to think of a more comprehensive internationalization at home with the use of hybrid approaches that allow the exchange of information and research in times of limited resources to finance physical academic mobility.

Regarding the possibilities of information exchange, Kumaravadivelu [32] points out the current characteristics of the globalization process, such as the shortening of spatial distance, the reduction of temporal distance and the disappearance of borders. He points out that one of the most distinctive features of the current process is electronic communication via the internet, with English being the language of globalization. For some time now, the role of English in the increased access to information [33], online education [34], increase in the production and circulation of scientific knowledge [35] and in the process of internationalization [16] has been discussed. In addition, it is possible to suggest the horizontalization of education with broader opportunities for all through the use of hybrid approaches [36], which, as we shall see later, can also be used in favor of a comprehensive and inclusive internationalization.

As suggested by Guimarães et al. [17], Northern and Western dominance in the process of internationalization is questionable as universities in the North and the West dominate research activities and sources of finance. According to Finardi and França [35], the hegemony of research activities is also questionable, since Brazil, for example, despite boasting the 13th largest academic production in the world, has little scientific impact. The aforementioned authors explain that one of the reasons for this discrepancy between scientific production (quantity) and international impact (quality) is largely due to the language in which most of the Brazilian

production is published. In this same line of reasoning, Vavrus and Pekol [25] say that globalization/ internationalization benefits the North more than the South, and Hamel [26] explains that this benefit is due to the linguistic bias that benefits Anglophone countries and those that adopt English as an academic and/or instructional language [27].

De Wit [37] also indicates that international cooperation in Latin America has occurred mostly with Northern universities, and especially with the United States and European institutions. He points out the need for Latin American countries to develop more cooperation among themselves in a South-South-type cooperation, following the lines of what Vavrus and Pekol [25] and Finardi et al. [16] also propose.

Yet, and going in the exact opposite direction, the Brazilian national internationalization call for graduate programs – CAPES-PrInt - prioritizes the following countries for internationalization agreements and cooperation: South Africa, Germany, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, Korea Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and United States of America. As is evident in this list, of the 26 countries listed, 15 are in Europe and two in North America, with only four countries belonging to the Southern Hemisphere and only two belonging to what Santos [38] calls the geopolitical South (Argentina and South Africa).

Stein et al. [39], reviewed in Guimarães et al. [17] propose a critical internationalization analyzing the intentions and results of this process, in order to avoid negative effects of internationalization such as the commodification of education previously mentioned.

IV. Final Remarks

In Brazil, the issue of the IHE gained great prominence with the advent of the Science without Borders (SwB) program, the main objective of which, was to finance academic mobility abroad. The SwB was the largest investment ever made by Brazil to encourage internationalization and it was responsible for raising awareness of the role of foreign languages in the process of internationalization, culminating in the creation of the English without Borders (EwB) program in 2012, renamed Languages Without Borders (LwB), in 2014.

It is worth noting that, influenced by economic motivations, knowledge of English is considered essential for participation in a globalized world where it acts as a lingua franca. Finardi and Csillagh [40] argue that no study on the role of languages in the internationalization process can be done without considering the role of English in it, and as suggested by Guimarães et al. [17] and by Finardi et al. [16], no account of internationalization is complete without considering the role of languages in it.

This study was motivated by the question of what are the challenges and possibilities for developing multilingualism and internationalization in Brazil. As a tentative response, the use of hybrid approaches, such as the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) learning approach is suggested for it may help the exchange of research and information in times of limited financial resources for physical mobility. Also, it is suggested that the use of the IA may help to stimulate multilingualism in Brazil. Taken together, the use of COIL and the IA may boost a more sustainable process of internationalization.

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